LEGIONS OF DEATH



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Between 264BC and 146BC, Carthage and the Roman Republic were locked in a prolonged struggle for survival which would irrevocably shape the future course of world history. This conflict became known as the Punic or Carthaginian Wars.

Carthage was primarily a trading nation founded by Phoenicians on the North African coast. She rose to considerable power with the help of her vast navy. Rome, on the other hand, was an agricultural society which had gained whatever power it had through conquest or the threat of it.

In 264BC, by a vote of the assembly of the people, a Roman army crossed the Straits of Messina to aid the Mamertines of Messana (Messina) against Carthage. It was thus on the economically rich island of Sicily that the two nations first met head-on.

By neutralising Carthaginian naval supremacy, Rome was ultimately able to inflict a decisive land defeat at the battle of Zama in 203BC. Thereafter, Carthage was a doomed city. The city of Carthage was destroyed by Rome in 146BC and her inhabitants scattered after a short and desperate war – The Third Punic War.

For Carthage the struggle was over and lost.

Rome turned her eyes eastwards, where Syria waited with sword drawn.

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